

Support for  
**Education  
Decentralisation**  
in Ghana

USAID's  
District Grant  
Mechanism

# **Support for Education Decentralisation in Ghana: USAID's District Grant Mechanism**

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## ACRONYMS

AD	Assistant Director of Education
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Test
CSA	Community-School Alliance
DA	District Assembly
DCE	District Chief Executive
DDE	District Director of Education
DEO	District Education Office
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committee
DEPT	District Education Planning Team
DMIT	District Management Implementation Team
DTST	District Teacher Support Team
GES	Ghana Education Service
ILP	Improving Learning through Partnerships
MOE	Ministry of Education
PMT	Performance Monitoring Tests
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
QUIPS	Quality Improvements in Primary Schooling
SMC	School Management Committee
SPAM	School performance appraisal meeting
SPIP	School performance improvement plan
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

## **FOREWORD**

This report presents the findings of a qualitative study that examined the education decentralisation process and the implementation, to date, of the district grant mechanism under the USAID/Ghana Quality Improvements in Primary Schooling (QUIPS) programme. The study was conducted in Tano, Jasikan, and Yilo Krobo districts in September and October 2002.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of a number of organisations and individuals that contributed to the success of the study. First I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Ghana. Funding for the overall DHS EdData Activity is provided by USAID's Office of Education in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade. Thanks also to ORC Macro for providing technical assistance. I would also like to acknowledge the close collaborative efforts between the staff of the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service in planning the study and conducting training. Finally, I am grateful to the education authorities, school staff, community members, and District Assembly officials in the three districts who generously gave their time to provide the information on which this report is based.

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## **PREFACE**

This study was a collaborative effort that involved many people from the University of Ghana, in particular from ISSER and the African Studies Centre. Dr. Clement Ahiadeke directed the data collection and analysis as well as the data preparation at ISSER. He was ably assisted by four research assistants who collected and summarized documents and interviewed officials at various levels in the districts. The research assistants were: Germaine Agyei-Asabere, Emmanuel Asampong, Phyllis Denteh, and Aku Fiadjoe. These people deserve our sincere gratitude for a job very well done.

# BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

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## 1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of a qualitative study that examined the decentralisation process and the implementation, to date, of the district grants mechanism under the USAID/Ghana Quality Improvements in Primary Schooling (QUIPS) programme. The study was conducted for USAID/Ghana to provide information useful for the monitoring and planning of education interventions. The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana at Legon collected and processed the data under a contract with ORC Macro. ORC Macro education specialists designed the study and provided technical assistance for all aspects of the research. The tasks of analysis and writing were shared between the principal investigator from ISSER and personnel from ORC Macro.

This chapter presents the objectives of the study, followed by a discussion of the functioning of the education system, the USAID QUIPS district grant mechanism, and the research questions and assumptions that guided the study. Chapter 2 reviews the research methods employed. Chapter 3 describes the Government of Ghana's policies on education decentralisation, while Chapter 4 explains how District Education Offices operate in the context of the partial decentralisation of education services. Chapter 5 addresses the other part of the study—namely, the initiation of the QUIPS district grant mechanism. Chapter 6 presents conclusions, focusing on policy recommendations.

## 1.2 Objectives

A decade ago, the Constitution of Ghana and subsequent legislation set up a framework for decentralising basic education services to the district level in Ghana. In theory, the decentralisation of government services represents a major redistribution of authority, responsibility, and financial and other resources. Some of the responsibilities transferred to the district level include budget preparation, promotions of teaching staff, disbursement of funds, and decision-making about the construction of new schools. For such a redistribution to succeed, the changes must be clearly outlined and communicated effectively to involved parties at all levels, from the Ministry of Education (MOE) down to individual teachers. In practice, it is unclear to what extent this process has produced results in the districts.

The USAID Mission in Ghana supports decentralisation efforts so that districts and schools are able to facilitate learning improvements more effectively. In the current phase of the QUIPS programme (which started in late 2001), this support includes financial incentives for schools and districts that demonstrate a sustained commitment to school improvement through specific actions. This approach differs from that of the early years of the QUIPS program (1996-2001), under which districts received



generic management training but were not held accountable for improving learning and received no financial resources to undertake school improvement activities.

This study investigated how the District Education Office (DEO) understands its role and responsibilities in managing the primary school system under decentralisation, how it has been receiving funds and accounting for them in the past several years, and how the DEO has received and used the funds recently distributed from USAID under the Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) district grant mechanism. One part of the study inquired into the strategy that the District Director of Education (DDE) uses to manage educational activities and improve school performance. The other part of the study examined how three districts have responded to the opportunity to participate in the district grant mechanism under the QUIPS program. The study examined the process by which districts request grants, receive and distribute funds, evaluate teacher and pupil performance, and how they report on their progress to USAID. One caveat is in order, however: Since the district grant mechanism was newly implemented at the time of the study, limited data were available on the functioning of the district grant mechanism thus far.

### **1.3 The functioning of the education system**

#### **Education reforms and their implementation**

The Ghana Education Service (GES) was established under the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1974 by government decree. In 1987, there was an Education Reform Programme to reduce the duration of pre-tertiary education from 17 to 12 years so that the savings could be used to expand access to education at the basic and secondary levels. While the Education Reform Programme of 1987 met many of its goals, there were unintended consequences as well, such as reduced quality of teaching, poorer learning outcomes, inadequate access to education services, and unsatisfactory financing arrangements.

In October 1996, the free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) Programme was launched to focus and redirect the 1987 Education Reform Programme. The fCUBE Programme seeks to ensure equity, quality and efficiency in the provision of education services. To promote quality education delivery, the Whole School Development (WSD) initiative was put in place to implement all interventions geared towards the attainment of the fCUBE objectives. The goal of the WSD is to bring about decentralisation of resource management, provision of resources, and support to schools in order to improve basic education delivery.

The implementation of fCUBE is beset by a number of constraints, including the delayed delivery of funds and non-release of funds, the absence of logistical support for implementation, poor and inadequate transportation, the lack of vehicles for frequent inspection and monitoring of programmes, and so on. Through the WSD, in all 110 districts in Ghana, District Teacher Support Teams (DTST) have been established to oversee teacher development at the district level, and District Education Planning Teams (DEPT) have also been established.

There is evidence that under fCUBE, without the timely delivery of funds for schooling, many schools are forced to find other sources of funding. Under these circumstances, as confirmed by a recent study of the household demand for schooling, schools have begun to charge parents a wide variety of fees to cover costs.<sup>1</sup>

The MOE and the GES are under constant stress and reform. For instance, according to a report released in June 2002 by the current acting director, John Budu-Smith, the GES is currently restructuring to improve its management of resources (Budu-Smith 2002). Under these conditions, there is uncertainty in both policy formation and implementation.

### **Institutional arrangements and funding sources**

Various government agencies are involved in planning and implementing policy on primary education, with assistance from donor agencies. At the central level, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for setting education policy, while the Ghana Education Service (GES) takes charge of implementing education policy. At the district level under the GES, the District Education Office (DEO) is responsible for managing the school system. The District Director of Education (DDE) acts as the manager and administrator for the district schools. In addition, within the District Assembly there is a District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) that plays a largely political role in monitoring school performance.

Districts currently receive funding for their operations from the central GES office, channelled through the District Assembly. Some of that funding originates from the government, while other funds may come from the Department for International Development (DfID), GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation), or JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). In particular, DfID has provided budgetary support to the GES over the past three years. However, because of processes in the GES, the delivery of funds to the DEO has been irregular. As a consequence, the DDE often is left to find alternative ways of financing school operations.

One aspect of education decentralisation is the management of resources at the district level, rather than at the central level. This aspect of decentralisation is in process, with the GES assessing district “readiness” for decentralisation on an annual basis. Districts are classified as ready, partially ready, or not ready to manage resources locally under decentralisation. Districts are classified according to their capacity to manage financial resources, to initiate education improvement programs, to function effectively in promoting the delivery of education services, and to communicate effectively both within the DEO and with other levels of the GES. Districts that are ready are empowered to design their work plans, manage resources, and conduct other business with a high degree of autonomy, while districts that are not yet ready have considerably more oversight from the regional and central

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<sup>1</sup> Awedoba, Albert K., P. Stanley Yoder, Kristi Fair, and Stephanie Gorin. 2003. Household Demand for Schooling in Ghana. Calverton, Maryland U.S.A.: ORC Macro.

levels of the GES.

## **1.4 The QUIPS district grant mechanism**

USAID/Ghana has long supported basic education in Ghana through the allocation of funds for training, for curriculum development, for gender equity (girls education), and for the improved management of resources. Current support focuses on the distribution of grants to districts to improve teaching and learning in selected schools.

According to USAID, the grant mechanism is designed to “enhance district capacity to assess, analyse, plan and manage the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of school and community based initiatives to improve teaching and learning.” It is intended to supplement, and not to replace, current sources of funding, and to provide assistance at the district, school, and community levels.

## **1.5 Research questions and assumptions**

### **Research questions**

This study focused on three central topics, explored through a series of research questions. For ease of interpretation, this report consolidates results on these three central topics that guided the study, as listed below.

- GES policy: What is the official Ghana Education Service (GES) policy on the decentralisation of authority and responsibilities to District Education Offices?
- The functioning of the District Education Office: What is the DEO’s understanding of GES policies relating to district authority and responsibilities for managing basic education (with a particular focus on teacher discipline)? What is each district’s approach to management and supervision? How do the DEOs function in the context of decentralisation—given the sporadic delivery of funding, and with some additional assistance from donor organisations?
- The district grant mechanism: What has been the experience of the DEO with the district grant mechanism to date, including the invitation to participate, the development of work plans, workshops attended by staff, reception of the first tranche of funds, and involvement of the local population? What plans have been made for using the second round of funds? How do participants assess the grant mechanism to date—what aspects are promising and what aspects are problematic?

### **Assumptions**

Efforts to decentralise resources and responsibilities for Ministries such as health and education in West African countries have often failed to be clear about the specific responsibilities of districts and have been unable to allocate sufficient resources in a systematic manner for effective functioning of districts. The research team made certain assumptions about the process of education decentralisation in

Ghana, which guided the design and implementation of the study. Also considered were elements that derive from research in similar situations in other African countries and from studies of the Ghanaian education experience. The assumptions state what the research team believed to be true of the educational system at the beginning of the study. The assumptions include the following:

- The transfer of funds from the GES to districts for school operations and improvement is sporadic and insufficient for effective school performance.
- In most cases the DDE alone makes the decisions about the allocation of funds within districts.
- Districts report very little information about teacher and pupil performance to the regional and central authorities of the GES.



## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

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The study data collection methods included the collection and examination of documents, individual interviews with MOE and GES personnel at the central level; with GES personnel at the district level; and at the school level, both individual conversations with head teachers and group interviews with teachers. The study collected data at the central level and in three districts situated in three regions: Brong Ahafo, Volta, and Eastern regions. The districts were chosen, with USAID input, from the 18 districts that had received grants in the first round of allocation. One district was ranked as high performing, one middle performing, and one low performing in terms of the implementation of grant activities.

### 2.1 Training

The decentralisation study began with a two-week period of training with the field workers and the principal investigator in August 2002. The field workers were students at the University of Ghana. Training in interviewing and reporting methods as well as preliminary examination of documents from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) were the main preoccupations during the training period. Two researchers from ORC Macro directed the training, which was mainly in qualitative research methods, interviewing techniques, and the drafting of the questioning guides and the other research instruments. Officials from the MOE and GES also participated in training.

### 2.2 Instrument

The questioning guide for GES officials constituted the core research instrument and was developed and modified during the training period. The main instrument was a questioning guide covering four topics:

#### Professional career

- Current responsibilities
- How he/she got the position now occupied
- Earlier posts and professional activities
- Overall account of professional career
- Interest in taking another position after the current one

#### Experience on the job

- Training or workshops attended
- How he/she spends the time at work
- Aspects of the work he/she likes or dislikes

- Things about the job he/she would like to change

#### Management of basic education

- Relation and contacts with Ghana Education Service (GES)
- GES policy regarding the evaluation of teacher performance
- GES policy regarding the evaluation of pupil performance
- His/her participation in the preparation of work plans or budgets
- How the DEO allocates resources
- How schools are selected to receive assistance

#### District grant mechanism

- Invitation to district from USAID/GES to participate in the district grant mechanism
- The process of preparing a work plan and budget for use of the grant (including who participated in the process)
- Ways the first tranche of funds was spent, including reporting on use of funds
- Plans to spend the second tranche
- Assessment of the grant mechanism so far

### **2.3 Study sites**

The study was conducted at the central level and in three districts: Yilo Krobo in the Eastern region, Jasikan in the Volta region, and Tano in the Brong Ahafo region. As mentioned above, these districts were selected from among the 18 districts that had received the first tranche of funds under the district grants mechanism. From these 18 districts, one district was selected from each category (low, medium and high performing) to represent the range of performance. The ranking is based on four criteria used by USAID: whether the districts (a) were implementing grant activities based on approved work plans, (b) meeting reporting requirements and submitting timely reports, (c) whose expenditure conformed with the approved budget in the work plan and (d) whose DMIT met regularly and recorded minutes of meetings. Based on these performance indicators, the 18 districts are classified as high, medium and low performers. Yilo Krobo was classified as low performing, Jasikan as medium performing, and Tano as high performing.

### **2.4 The data collection process**

The data collection process involved two teams: one team (two persons) remained in Accra to collect and analyse documents from the MOE, the GES, and USAID. The other team (two field workers plus the principal investigator) travelled to the three selected districts to collect information. Data were collected in September and October 2002.

During the course of the study, the research team conducted group discussions and individual interviews with district education officials. Other respondents included parents or guardians, community members, parent teacher association (PTA) members, other local leaders and senior staff of the District



Assembly.

## **The central level**

At the central level (Accra), the study team:

- Collected and reviewed documents from the MOE and GES that set out the authority and responsibilities for the central and district levels for implementing basic education.
- Interviewed officials from the MOE and the GES about their views of their own authority and responsibilities in relation to the districts, and about how their instructions are communicated to other levels.
- Collected and reviewed documents from USAID about the process and objectives of the grant mechanism.
- Interviewed officials from USAID and the collaborating agencies (ILP, CSA, and CRS) about the process of grant dispersal.

Analysing the study documents involved a series of tasks. The team read the documents, identified the key concepts, described the activities that fit into these concepts/categories, and identified the types of persons (posts) responsible for conducting the activities. Once these tasks were completed, the team summarized the contents of the text and identified the author, the objective, the target audience, the distribution, and likely use of the document.

## **The district level**

At the district level, individual interviews were conducted with the District Director of Education, the four frontline Assistant Directors (Finance and Administration; Human Resource, Manpower and Development; Statistics; and Supervision) and other members of the DEO about their work and their knowledge of district operations. Also interviewed were circuit supervisors, head teachers, community leaders and members of the School Management Committee (SMC) and PTA chairmen.<sup>1</sup> The study team observed schools that have received QUIPS assistance and “comparison schools” and also attended some special events related to primary school education in these districts. The interview guide included questions about respondents’ responsibilities, their understanding of their authority and responsibilities, and experiences in school activities and community mobilization in conjunction with the grant program.

On arrival at the district office, the researchers first asked to meet with the District Director of Education (DDE) to introduce themselves and explain the purpose of their visit to the district. In the absence of the DDE in Tano and Yilo Krobo, the study team met with the next in command, usually the AD Finance and Administration. After the initial greetings and protocol, the letter of introduction was

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a complete listing of the respondents.

presented to the official who then invited some of the frontline Assistant Directors (ADs) to meet with the researchers. In Yilo Krobo, the DEO had not received notice of the study team's visit, the DEO staff asked several questions about the study and its objectives. In Jasikan and Tano, where the team's arrival was expected, only a few questions were asked.

Once the protocol had been completed, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the frontline ADs. Typically, the team leader met with the AD Supervision, while the other team members met with the other ADs and the budget officer. The AD Supervision provided a detailed list of documents requested by the study team, including district work plans, minutes from procurement meetings, minutes from budget committee meetings, quarterly reports, and action plans for the district grant mechanism and for following up on Performance Monitoring Test (PMT) results. The team also examined head teachers' cash and imprest books. The AD Supervision provided a detailed itinerary of school visits to be made on the third day of the team's stay in the district.

The AD Supervision and the principal investigator compiled a list of circuit supervisors, SMC members, PTA Chairmen, DEPT/DMIT members and other officials to be interviewed. In some cases, an individual served on more than one committee or in more than one capacity. For example, a PTA chairman might also be a member of the DMIT or SMC. Respondents representing more than one group were asked to respond for more than one committee or board.

A school visit was led by the AD Supervision on the third day of the team's stay in the district. Selected schools (usually one QUIPS school, a comparison school and one of the best schools in the district) were visited without prior notice. School visits were designed to allow for interviews with the head teacher, a teacher, the PTA chairman, and a member of the SMC. In some cases, a traditional council member was also interviewed. A combination of individual and group interviews were conducted.

The study team met with the District Chief Executive (DCE) and his/her staff (including the planning officer, the member responsible for education and a traditional council member). Discussions revolved around the relationship between the District Assembly and the DEO. Critical issues discussed included how government grants passing through the DCE are used, the work of the DEOC (of which the DCE is the chairman), the impact of QUIPS and other non-governmental assistance to district schools, and community participation in school affairs.

The study team spent about five days in each district. The last day was devoted to tasks such as trying to locate respondents who had not yet been interviewed and cross-checking contradictory information provided by DEO officials.

The two field workers and the principal investigator took copious notes during the interviews and reviewed them immediately afterwards. Occasionally, the study team returned to a respondent for additional information. These notes and additional comments were typed and distributed among the team and the ORC Macro researchers.

## **2.5 Data analysis**

The research teams and the principal investigator in Accra conducted much of the analysis working from their notes and comments. They compared the accounts of the work performed by the officials interviewed in each district to check for consistency and overlap. These voices of various officials sometimes coincided but often contradicted each other. The differences in accounts sometimes stemmed from the roles each one had played in dealing with issues that arose, and sometimes from vested interests in a certain perspective. For example, a circuit supervisor may present an account of problems encountered in his supervisory visits to schools, while the head teachers of those schools have a different view of the same problems. One of those issues that surfaced repeatedly was the disciplining of teachers who were not performing as expected.



## 3.1 Policies on responsibilities for the education system and for oversight

As mentioned in Chapter 1, more than one government agency is involved in planning and implementing policy in primary education. At the central level, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for setting education policy, while the Ghana Education Service (GES) implements policy. At the district level under the GES, the District Education Office (DEO) is responsible for managing the school system. The District Director of Education (DDE), who heads the DEO, manages the district schools. In addition, within the District Assembly, the District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) is charged with monitoring school performance.

GES regulations and guidelines describe the expected cooperation between the District Assembly and the DEO in matters concerning education. An undated GES Service Council memo, *Guidelines for District Education Oversight Committees*, sets out the expected relationship between the DEOC, the DEO, and school-based groups such as the board of governors, SMCs, and PTAs. The web of relationships is complex. The DEOC, which is housed in the District Assembly, is expected to “be concerned with and oversee” the conditions of school buildings, the provision of teachers, teacher and pupil attendance, school staff’s performance of duties, and the moral and disciplined behaviour of staff and pupils in the district. The DEOC is expected to depend on the circuit supervisors and the district inspector of schools for information on these matters. Problems brought to the DEOC’s attention are to be taken to the DDE (in the DEO) “for action.” Moreover, the DEOC is charged with oversight of the use of the District Assemblies Common Fund education monies by the DEO. Twice a year, the DEOC is also expected to submit a report to the GES “on the performance and conditions of schools in its district.”

Mandating workable relationships across government entities is a challenging business. Even in a well-functioning DEO, one would expect that there would be conflicts between the line of authority in the GES—down from the headquarters and the regional office, to the DEO—and the authority in the District Assembly. As discussed further in Chapter 5, in the districts studied, even in a DEO with a good working relationship with the District Assembly, there were tensions over some issues.

## 3.2 Teacher discipline policy: The Code of Professional Conduct

A GES Council document, *Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) Conditions and Scheme of Service and the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (November 2000), sets out an agreement between GNAT and the GES Council on teachers’ professional conduct. The Code of Professional Conduct specifies what constitutes misconduct of lesser and greater types, and

purports to set out a course of action to be taken when teachers violate the code of conduct.

## **Defining misconduct**

Minor misconduct includes occasional or lesser offences, such as drinking and smoking while on duty and being found drunk during school/office hours. Major misconduct includes recurrent offences such as “habitual drunkenness” and substantial breaches of trust such as sexual offences.

The remedies for minor misconduct (category A) include the following steps (pp. 85-86):

- i. “Warning or reprimand (plus surcharge where applicable, to be given in writing always for record purposes)
- ii. Suspension with loss of pay and/or allowance (not more than 14 days in case of pay); or
- iii. Stoppage of increment (this means non-payment for a specified period of an increment otherwise due); or one year
- iv. Disciplinary transfer
- v. Termination - for persistent misconduct.”

The remedies for major misconduct (category B) include the following (pp. 86-87):

- i. “Deferment of increment (this means a postponement of the date on which the next increment is due with corresponding postponement in subsequent years)
- ii. Reduction in rank or of salary ...
- iii. Suspension means loss of pay and allowances for a period not exceeding two years as the disciplinary authority may direct;
- iv. Removal from the Ghana Education Service (this means termination of appointment with full or reduced retirement benefits as the disciplinary authority may direct)
- v. Dismissal (this means termination of appointment with forfeiture of all retirement benefits)
- vi. Termination (this means that the offender may be treated as in iv above)
- vii. Striking off name from the Register of Teachers (this means the withdrawal of one’s certificate or license to teach with consequent termination of appointment for good).”

Interestingly, the document does not specify how these penalties are to be assessed. For example, lateness to work is a category A offence. The document does not specify whether on the first offence, the official is to be warned or reprimanded (i), or whether a different remedy may be applied on the first offence. Nor is there guidance on how many warnings an offender should be given before another more severe penalty is incurred. And on the most serious category B offences, such as sexual offences, is it permissible to apply the most lenient of penalties on the first occasion?

## **Disciplinary Authorities for major and minor misconduct**

Another section of the Code of Professional Conduct (Part 7), Levels of Authority for Imposing Penalties, lists the Disciplinary Authorities for minor (category A) and major (category B) offences. The authorities differ for minor and major offences, and it is worth noting that there is no guidance as to who is responsible for determining whether an offence is minor or major. In other words, who is to determine whether an offender is drunk on duty (category A) or guilty of habitual drunkenness (category B)?

For minor misconduct, the Disciplinary Authorities are relatively straightforward. At the District Education Office, the DDE is the Disciplinary Authority, while in the institutions/schools, the School Management Committee is the Disciplinary Authority.

The guidance on major (category B) misconduct is more complicated. There are different Disciplinary Authorities according to the penalties assessed (see penalties i through vii above). The more serious the censure, the higher is the level of authority for decision-making. For instance, at the district level, for category B, i disciplinary action, the Disciplinary Authority is the DDE. For category B, ii-iii disciplinary action, the Disciplinary Authority is the Regional Disciplinary Committee, and so on. Again, though, it is unclear how the penalties are to be prescribed and by which level of the system.

## **The hierarchy of authority for assessing misconduct and applying censure**

The document also provides a general discussion of authority for disciplinary matters. It is clear about the ultimate GES authority, stating in the section on Levels of Disciplinary Authority for Operating the Code (Part 6) that “the Disciplinary Authority for members shall be vested in the GES Council or a body to whom that power may be delegated.” This authority may be delegated to the Director-General of the GES. In addition, the GES Council is to appoint disciplinary committees at the regional and district levels.

At the national level, the highest authority is the GES Council, followed by the Disciplinary Committee, and the Director-General. At the regional level, the Regional Disciplinary Committee is the highest authority, followed by the Regional Director.

At the district level, though, there is a not-entirely-successful effort to sort out the new relationships that obtain under decentralisation. There is an odd overlap of authority between the District Assembly and the GES. The document stipulates that the highest authority at the district level is the District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) in the District Assembly, followed by the District Disciplinary Committee (within the GES), and the District Director of Education (within the GES District Education Office). The document further states that: “The District Disciplinary Committee shall advise and assist the District Education Oversight Committees in performing their disciplinary functions” (p. 99). Based on this description, it seems that at the district level, the DDE is expected to report disciplinary problems to the District Disciplinary Committee, which should then go to the DEOC with the issues. From there, presumably the DEOC is expected to report on discipline issues in its semi-



annual reports to the GES.

An undated GES Service Council memo, *Guidelines for District Education Oversight Committees*, suggests a different approach to dealing with discipline problems at the district level, while also setting out the interrelated authority of the District Assembly and the GES. Under the section “The Moral Behaviour of Staff and Pupils and Matters Relating to General Discipline,” the memo states:

Information on errant staff and pupils could be obtained from the communities through the SMCs and BGs. These reports should be sent to the DDE who would in turn refer them to the District Disciplinary Committee for investigation, where necessary. Following this, appropriate action should be taken by the DDE on behalf of the DEOC. The DDE should report action taken to the DEOC.

This statement is full of conditional phrases and recommendations, such as “could” and “should,” rather than stating emphatically which group is responsible for which tasks. Ultimately, it is unclear which office or committee is expected to carry out the disciplinary procedures for major and minor offences. Between the convoluted description of penalties set out in the Code of Professional Conduct, the absence of explanation of key procedures and responsibilities, and the ambiguity introduced by the DEOC’s role in disciplinary matters, the stage is set for disciplinary matters to fall through the cracks in the system.

Within the GES administrative offices, the District Director of Education (DDE) in the District Education Office is to report to the Regional Director of Education in the Regional Education Office, who reports to the Director at Headquarters. How this line of authority interacts with the other lines of authority at the district level (with the DEOC being paramount), is unclear. Another statement in the document is that “The District Director shall be responsible for disciplinary matters at the District Office,” perhaps suggesting that for discipline within the DEO itself, the DDE is the ultimate authority and does not need to report to the DEOC through the District Disciplinary Committee.

At the institutional or school level, the highest level of authority is to be the “Board of Governors/The School Management Committee, The School Committee, or any other such body,” followed by the Head of the Institution, and finally by “Any teacher or member of the Service to whom the Head of the Institution shall delegate disciplinary authority.” Presumably then, the School Management Committee (SMC) is to report on disciplinary matters to the District Director of Education (DDE), or to one of his staff such as the circuit supervisor or the AD Supervision.

## **Proceedings and appeals**

Guidelines are set out for summary proceedings (for minor offences) and formal proceedings (for major offences). These guidelines include the framing of charges and a request to the accused to send a written statement “to exculpate himself” in reply. If the Disciplinary Authority is not satisfied that the accused has exculpated himself, further inquiry into the charges is made and a hearing may be held.

At the end of the hearing, if the Disciplinary Authority determines that the accused is guilty, “he shall consider what penalty should be imposed in accordance with the provision of the Code of Professional Conduct” (p. 118).

Conditions are set out for GES members to appeal judgements, such as the period of time within which a decision must be appealed, the number of appeals that may be made, etc. Interestingly, the document specifies that appeals must be made through the Disciplinary Authority who made the disputed decision, but there is no discussion of what happens to the appeal from there—whether it automatically gets forwarded to the next highest level of authority, or is considered at that level first. Chapter 4 includes an examination of the implementation of teacher discipline policies in the districts under study.

### **3.3 GES policy on decentralisation to the district level**

Under education decentralisation, within the GES, various powers, responsibilities, and competencies are intended to be transferred from GES headquarters to the DEOs. Some of the responsibilities to be transferred to the district level include budget preparation, promotion of staff to the grade of senior superintendent and senior administrative officer, the disbursement and management of grants, and recommending the establishment of new schools.

In fact, the GES practices what might be called conditional decentralisation, at least when it comes to some functions. Each year, districts are assessed by GES and classified as ready, partially ready, or not ready to manage resources locally under decentralisation. Districts are classified according to their capacity to manage financial resources, to initiate education improvement programs, to function effectively in promoting the delivery of education services, and to communicate effectively both within the DEO and with other levels of the GES. Districts that are ready are empowered to design their work plans, manage resources, and conduct other business with a high degree of autonomy, while districts that are not yet ready have considerably more oversight from the regional or central levels of the GES. As addressed in Chapter 5, the GES approach to working with DEOs classified as “not ready” for decentralisation has implications for the functioning of the district, particularly when it comes to funding.

As of September 2002, 42 districts were classified as ready, 45 as partially ready, and 23 as not ready. So, when it comes to designing work plans, managing resources, and the other functions discussed above, there are degrees of decentralisation.

A district’s readiness may change from year to year, depending on its characteristics. In late 2002, Tano was classified as ready, Jasikan as partially ready, and Yilo Krobo not ready. A GES official, however, mentioned that in the next assessment, Jasikan probably would be downgraded to not ready.



This chapter describes the organisation of the DEO, how the office is intended to function, and what actually happens in the three districts studied. The District Director of Education (DDE) is in charge of the District Education Office (DEO) and sees to the administration of education in the district, with the assistance of the four front-line Assistant Directors (AD), who in turn work with circuit supervisors to monitor and supervise schools. For operations to run smoothly, teamwork is required within the DEO and between the DEO and the District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC). The DEOC provides oversight to the DEO and is part of the District Assembly, which is responsible for directing all government activity in the districts.

## **4.1 The working relationship between the DEO and the District Assembly**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the District Assemblies are expected to play an important role in the management of the district schools. In both Tano and Yilo Krobo, the working relationship between the District Assembly and the DEO, and between the DCE and DDE in particular, seems to be collaborative and cordial.

In Tano, the working relationship between the District Assembly and the DEO seems to be particularly good. The DCE is a very active chairman who takes an interest in developing good education infrastructure in the district. The district provides scholarships to teacher trainees and to needy children at the lower levels of education. The district office participates in school visits as well as sensitisation programmes to make communities aware of their obligations to schools. The DCE attributes increasing enrolment figures for girls to the girl-child education program in the district. He attends SPAM meetings, visits schools and is aware of what goes on in the district overall.

As in Tano, the DCE in Yilo Krobo has a good working relationship with the District Education Office (DEO) and with the GES in general. The DCE is actively involved in the sensitisation program in the communities. As the chairman of the DEOC, he makes sure that the DEOC members go out to the communities to interact with parents and teachers. They educate parents about the need to send their children to school and also provide guidance to children on their future careers. The District Assembly provides funding for sensitisation efforts and sponsorship for teacher trainees.

In Jasikan, however, the working relationship between the District Assembly and the DEO is poor. The DCE is critical of how the DEO operates under decentralization. The DCE complained that the DEO does not follow procedures and does not keep the DCE informed of important developments. One instance of this is the fact that the DCE learned of the QUIPS district grant from the study team, rather than from the DEO. The DCE complained that the DEO works directly with the GES in Accra

instead of going through the District Assembly. For instance, while the District Tender Board is supposed to award contracts below 250 million cedis, the DEO does not follow that regulation, but awards contracts without consulting the District Tender Board. The DCE said that the DDE considers himself to be independent and misses meetings he is not interested in attending. While the DCE is putting together a master plan for development in the district, the DDE refuses to participate. On the other side, the DDE's complaint is that the DCE is trying to micromanage education.

#### **4.2 DEO contact with the GES regional office and headquarters**

Generally speaking, in the districts under study, DEO contact with GES headquarters is limited to the receipt of circulars and other guidelines, and to the sending of information to headquarters. In the few months preceding data collection, the DEOs had received circulars on topics such as PMT, SPAM, the implementation of fCUBE, and girl child education. There is occasional contact between DEO and headquarters staff at workshops and other official events, but this is less common than DEO contact with regional office staff at workshops.

According to respondents, many of these workshops are organised under QUIPS. Other officials, though, mentioned workshops unrelated to QUIPS activities. Within the three months preceding the interviews, DEO staff in the districts under study worked with regional office staff at workshops on classroom observation, on conducting comprehensive school visits, and on the effective use of the head teacher's and circuit supervisor's handbook.

Respondents were also asked about regional office officials' visits to the DEO. Most of these visits appear to be for the delivery of documents rather than for substantive meetings. What visits there are may involve limited DEO staff, and the information may not be shared widely within the DEO. As one AD Human Resources Management and Development put it, "Visitors who come from the regional office meet the District Director without me, hence it is impossible to state the number of times" visitors came over the last school year.

By and large, respondents were appreciative of the guidance received from higher levels of the GES. Based on discussions with staff from the higher levels of the GES, one AD Statistics said, "I have improved upon my supervisory work," while one AD Finance and Administration said that the interaction "helped us to correct our mistakes." An AD Supervision considers his interactions with higher levels of the GES "often useful." In particular, he appreciates guidance on the implementation of fCUBE, improving teaching and learning, and techniques for effective management and supervision. Another AD Supervision found the last meeting with a GES regional office official "quite useful and relevant to my work" because the discussion focussed on "the need for the DDE to work hand in hand with the administration" at the DEO.

Not all officials, however, were satisfied with these interactions. One AD Human Resources Management and Development, on the other hand, did not have valuable interactions with senior levels of the GES. The AD explained that on the rare occasions when she has personal interaction with these

officials, the DEO is blamed “with regard to the falling standard in general education, rather than constructive suggestions towards improving quality education.” She continued, saying that the regional office officials seem to know much less about decentralisation than those in the DEO, giving “mis-directed” instructions when asked about procedures and processes.

DEO officials were also asked about the nature and frequency of their reports to the regional office and to headquarters. Across the study districts, there was a high degree of similarity. Written annual and quarterly reports are submitted to the regional office, as well as situational reports. In addition, one AD Supervision noted that the DEO reports back to the GES regional office and headquarters on school assessments and on disciplinary matters “if a teacher is dismissed.”

### **4.3 DEO management approach**

The DEOs in the districts visited make an effort to follow guidelines passed down from higher levels of the GES. However, as discussed below, this is not always a straightforward task, given the lack of clarity in policy, the funding constraints, and the practical limitations on DEO authority. The following sections address funding and budgeting issues, school monitoring and supervision, assessing teacher performance, teacher discipline, and the involvement of the local population in school activities.

### **4.4 Funding and budgeting for DEO activities**

#### **Sources of funding**

The DEOs receive funding primarily from two sources: the Government of Ghana (GOG) and from international donor agencies like USAID through programmes such as QUIPS. The GOG funds are released to the DEO via the District Assembly. Or rather, when the funds are made available to the District Assembly, they are transferred to the DEO. There is a widely-acknowledged problem in the timely dispersal of government funds to districts and schools. According to a senior GES official, the bulk of the government funding for the 2001-2002 school year was not received by schools until after the end of that school year, following delays in getting funding to the District Assemblies and the DEOs throughout the country. It is self evident that an office or a school without funds cannot function properly. The remainder of this chapter is situated in this context of undependable funding for critical education activities.

On the ground, there are obvious consequences to the lack of funds, whether because of delayed dispersal or the inadequacy of available funds, once received. At the district level, one AD Statistics said that because he has no means of transport to collect data from schools in the district, he is unable to compile current statistics. So, he simply uses data collected by the previous AD at a time when there were sufficient resources for travel. These circumstances were confirmed by the DDE and other officials in the district, who complained of not being able to conduct supervisory visits to schools. In this context, as one district official said, “Decentralisation is only on paper and not on the ground.”

It should also be noted that even when funds arrive at the District Assembly, their transfer to the DEO is not always smooth. In Jasikan, for example, there was an ongoing dispute between the DDE and the DCE over funding. The DDE complained that the DCE delays the release of GOG funds to the DEO. The DCE, however, said that he does release the funds, but only after reviewing the DEO's budget.

### **Budgeting and allocation of resources**

Using ceilings for both GOG funds and donor funds, annual budgets are drawn up by the Budget Officer for approval by the DDE. Then, depending on the district's state of readiness, the prepared budget is sent to the GES in Accra either through the regional office, as in the case of partially-ready and non-ready districts like Jasikan and Yilo Krobo, or directly to the GES, as in the case of a ready district like Tano.

In these three districts, the budget officer prepares budgets for presentation at the budgeting seminar with very little assistance from the other departments. In the study districts, the ADs in charge of Supervision were dissatisfied the budget allocation and were critical of the fact that they were excluded from the budgeting process. In particular, all three ADs said that the district needed to increase support to teachers in the districts.

The DEOs allocate resources to schools based on various criteria. According to the three DDEs, school enrolment is the main criterion in allocating funding above a certain level needed to operate a school. Whenever there is grant for rehabilitation, the most deprived schools become the first beneficiaries. There is also an effort to distribute funds across all circuits in the district. Other factors taken into account are the school's remoteness, staff qualifications and other local conditions.

## **4.5 School monitoring and supervision and teacher assessment**

### **Impediments**

In the study districts, there is variation in the extent to which the AD Statistics is able to do his job. In Tano, the AD Statistics is actively engaged in collecting data on enrolment, school staffing, and school infrastructure. Information collected is sent to the GES in Accra for further analysis and for making informed decisions on posting of teachers and the supply of equipment.

By contrast, the AD Statistics in Jasikan is unable to collect data because he has "no vehicle to move around and no money for transportation" to schools. The AD Statistics said that he finds his job "a waste of his time" because "I just sit in the office to read newspapers from morning till the close of day."

Respondents mentioned several barriers to the DEO providing adequate oversight at schools. As suggested earlier, the late receipt of inadequate funding for DEO activities affects all aspects of DEO

functioning, including school supervision. Many circuit supervisors do not have access to road-worthy vehicles and to fuel, which limits the extent to which they are able to provide oversight at schools.

Another impediment to the effective supervision of schools, mentioned by more than one circuit supervisor, is the long delay in being reimbursed for travel and transportation expenses. Circuit supervisors are less likely to go about their duties if they are not paid for costs incurred.

In addition, in some seasons, schools may be inaccessible. A circuit supervisor in Yilo Krobo who oversees 13 basic schools admitted that he is unable to visit 5 of the schools because of the difficulty in reaching these schools.

The beginning of every academic year is crucial for circuit supervisors because they need to go to all schools within their jurisdiction to ensure that all the teachers and head teachers report to work. Those teachers who do not report for duty must be replaced. During the study, when schools reopened, only about half of the circuit supervisors in rural areas in these districts had made all their rounds. Remote schools requiring the climbing of mountains or crossing large rivers or lakes are scarcely visited during the rainy season.

### **Assessing school performance**

In the districts included in the study, school performance is assessed through a combination of brief visits and comprehensive school assessments conducted by circuit supervisors and by DEO staff, including the AD Supervision. Circuit supervisors make the most visits to schools, as expected. Most respondents said that circuit supervisors visit all schools during a given year for the purpose of assessing school performance, with the exception of the Jasikan AD Supervision, who said that some schools were not visited in the previous school year because of the difficulty in reaching them. For the purpose of evaluating school performance, DEO staff make fewer school visits, concentrating on perhaps two schools per circuit during a given year. One official in Yilo Krobo said that comprehensive school visits are seldom undertaken because of lack of financial resources and “understaffing at the DEO.”

All respondents said that the guidelines for assessing school performance come from the Inspectorate Division at GES headquarters. Factors in evaluating school performance include PMT and other test results, staff attendance and punctuality, community support for school activities, teacher-pupil interactions, and the conditions of school buildings.

In Tano, the DDE meets with the circuit supervisors every Monday to be informed about situations in the schools. In Jasikan, there is a group of ten circuit supervisors who select two among them to meet with the DDE when they have problems to be discussed.

### **Assessing teacher performance**

The DDE oversees the evaluation of teacher performance through the AD Supervision and the



circuit supervisors. Information is collected during school visits, and sources of information include documents (teacher lesson plans, records of teacher punctuality and attendance, pupils' exercise books, and head teacher supervision notes), interviews with head teachers and sometimes with pupils and community members, and observation of teachers' lessons. According to one AD Statistics, in addition to those evaluation factors suggested above, teacher performance is also evaluated by the rate at which a teacher's pupils pay school fees.

Circuit supervisors said that, to the extent possible, they check teachers' lesson notes, the number of exercises given to pupils, and whether the exercises are marked and corrected. In terms of pupil performance, the DEO relies mainly on various tests—including the Performance Monitoring Test (PMT) and the Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)—for information on pupil achievement. The DEO also is attentive to changing enrolment patterns in communities, noting when participation rises or falls.

One AD Human Resources Management and Development (HRMD) said that inspections are done primarily of teachers up for promotion, rather than being done systematically for all teachers. Reports are processed by the DEO and forwarded to the regional office for action on promotion. These evaluations are used to determine promotion, of course, but several respondents suggested that teacher evaluations were also used identify strengths and weaknesses and to help teachers improve their performance.

Respondents were asked how they thought the teacher evaluation process could be improved. Most respondents suggested that further training for staff at various levels of the system would improve the teacher evaluation process. One AD Supervision suggested further in-service training in teaching methods for teachers and in supervision for circuit supervisors. This opinion was echoed by the DDE in the same district, and by an AD Statistics, who said, "Once in a while, teachers need to be examined. We [in the DEO] also need to be tested on our performance." One AD HRMD recommended the upgrading of DEO staff professional qualifications, and added that "GES headquarters should insist on the submission of analysed data and ensure the implementation of the serious recommendations."

Recommendations also included suggestions for closer scrutiny of performance and for guaranteed confidentiality. One AD Supervision suggested that evaluation of teachers would benefit from a closer examination of teacher's interactions with pupils, the way he/she prepares for class, and techniques for running classes. An AD Finance and Administration suggested that, "Head teachers could write confidential reports about teachers under them," so as to provide frank assessments of teacher performance to higher levels of the GES.

#### **4.6 Teacher discipline and the Code of Professional Conduct**

Generally speaking, officials were familiar with what constituted professional misconduct. As one Jasikan DEO official summarised the code of professional conduct, "Teachers should be disciplined persons."

## **District-level authority to take disciplinary action**

Across the districts, there is variation in perceived authority for discipline at the district level. This variation is in which combination of GES officials and entities has authority; none of the officials mentioned the District Assembly's DEOC as an authority or even as an advisory group on disciplinary matters.

Respondents agreed that the DDE has authority, although several officials said that the DDE's authority was held in partnership with The Disciplinary Committee. One respondent said of the disciplinary authority at the district level, "It is not done by the DDE alone; neither is it done by the committee alone."

A few officials also said that head teachers, circuit supervisors, and ADs have disciplinary authority within the district. One AD in Yilo Krobo emphasised, though, that the DDE had to be informed of all actions taken by lower-level GES officials.

## **Options for disciplining a teacher who violates the Code of Professional Conduct**

In discussing remedies for misconduct, respondents rarely distinguished between minor and major violations, although the remedies mentioned are in more or less in keeping with those for minor infractions. Several respondents said the first action taken against misconduct was a verbal warning to the official in question, followed by other remedies should that fail to induce changed behaviour. One official referred to a normal practice in the district: "The options are warning for three times and the fourth action leads to suspension of salary." One AD Supervision explained that the suspension of salary was the remedy for repeated absenteeism, adding that, "This was done to two teachers [in the district] last year."

Another penalty frequently mentioned was an intra-district transfer to a school close to the DEO. Most respondents said that this was an effective measure because it allowed DEO officials to visit the offending teacher on a regular basis and to observe his/her habits. As one AD Supervision explained, "We transferred a teacher [closer] to the district recently and we are paying close attention to him." Another official talked of using "clinical supervision" to diagnose the teacher's problems and help him/her improve. This remedy appears to be commonly imposed, raising the question of how head teachers near the DEO respond to perhaps multiple transfers of teachers guilty of misconduct into their schools.

An AD Supervision also mentioned the option of giving a teacher an open transfer or a release to move to another district. Again, this approach to "solving" discipline problems by transferring them out of the district in question to another district raises the question of how effective a remedy this can be for a school system overall.

Another AD Supervision focused on penalties for drunkenness, saying that drunkenness resulted

in an appearance before the District Disciplinary Committee, while persistent drunkenness resulted in a recommendation for dismissal. He did not, however, provide an example of these penalties being enforced.

A circuit supervisor in one district listed an “embargo” on the teacher’s salary and demotion in rank as other options. He added that both of those remedies, along with the transfer of teachers closer to the DEO, had been carried out in his circuit in the previous school year.

Officials are aware of at least some of the options for disciplining teachers for misconduct. It is not clear that officials are aware of the range of prescribed remedies in the Code of Professional Conduct, nor of an official progression from one penalty to the next. Only one official mentioned the option of dismissing a teacher “for gross indiscipline,” suggesting that this remedy is rarely imposed. However, it is clear that there are disciplinary norms operating in these districts and that disciplinary measures are taken—at least for minor misconduct.

### **Disciplinary Authorities in action**

As discussed above, lines of authority for dealing with teacher misconduct are not entirely clear, and neither are the guidelines for imposing various penalties. Essentially, the system operates ineffectively, either not dealing at all with misconduct or offering ample opportunity to truncate the process before its logical completion.

Stories of GES officials at various levels of the system complaining about inaction on disciplinary matters are common, as is the complaint that even when action is taken at a lower level of the system, it is often reversed at higher levels of the system. In the districts under study, most of these instances had to do with drunk teachers in Jasikan. A circuit supervisor complained that the DEO takes no action against teachers whose conduct is inappropriate. He gave the example of a drunk teacher who had been sent a number of query letters, but had not responded. The circuit supervisor said that he felt powerless to effect change, since the DDE had refused to address the problem further. Also in Jasikan, another circuit supervisor said that two years ago, he had asked the AD Supervision to discipline a drunk teacher. He explained the action taken and the results, “The drunk teacher got a release to the Catholic Unit and was posted back to the Catholic school in another community in my circuit. This is indeed very sad.”

In another district, the AD Supervision gave an example of how a discipline issue was handled, or mishandled: “There was an interesting case here recently when both the pupils and their parents locked [a habitually drunk teacher] out of the community. He is being kept at the office for probation.” The AD did not approve of how the disciplinary issue was addressed, saying, “I think he should have been dismissed after some time. The situation should not have been allowed to get into the hands of the pupils and their parents.”

The Code of Professional Conduct suggests that the SMC should have handled the matter

initially, and then, perhaps, gone to the DEO for assistance. Instead, because of inaction at the school level, the pupils and their parents rose up and drove the teacher from the community. Only then did the DEO respond to the community's request, and address the problem. And, in the view of the AD, the DDE had not yet taken severe enough action with respect to this teacher. Another official in the district, mentioning the same case, had a different view, saying that "The DEO finally responded and a solution was found."

More than one respondent said that the handling of handling teacher discipline was the most challenging task for a DEO official. One AD Supervision explained the quandary, and at the same time captured the ambiguities inherent in the code:

It is difficult to decide when to dismiss a teacher who is a drunk teacher. The policy must include some psychological treatment for such people. It is also difficult to follow up on teachers under supervision. The mix of sanctions to provide is not clear to me.

## **Postscript**

Following the completion of the fieldwork and the presentation of results in February 2002, the principal investigator learned of disciplinary action taken against staff in the Yilo Krobo DEO. There was suspicion of the misuse of funds from the district grant mechanism, and the official in charge of managing these funds ultimately received a disciplinary transfer.

### **4.7 Involving the local population in school activities**

Among respondents, there was a common view of the GES policy on involving the local population in school activities. Respondents described two parts to community involvement in schools: ownership and responsibility. As one Jasikan official said, “Schools are community based and so the local people should be involved in school activities.” An AD Supervision captured both aspects of this intended involvement: “The community must see the school as belonging to them. It is their duty and responsibility to maintain and sustain whatever improvement is made.”

DEO officials were asked how they understood and evaluated the GES policy on community involvement. A Jasikan official said the policy was good because community involvement helps “in providing quality education.” One AD HRMD said that in his view, the policy helps “the community to understand situation of education in their schools.” One AD Supervision, though, evaluated the purpose of the policy as follows: “It is to help reduce the workload of the GES staff without compromising on...standards.”

Respondents also contrasted the nature of community involvement in what they viewed as the districts’ best and worst schools. In respondents’ answers, there was a clear correlation between the quality of a school and the degree of community involvement in schools. Most respondents said that nearly all schools had PTAs and SMCs, but described their functioning quite differently in good and bad schools. In the best schools, “PTA executives visit the schools regularly to find out the problems of the school in matters of teaching and learning,” and “recruited volunteered pupil teachers because of inadequate staffing” (a Jasikan official). They also help to organise communal labour, and provide inputs to teachers, such as food and accommodation. As one AD Supervision said of the PTA and SMC in the best schools, “Their meetings are regular and whatever they decide to do is done well.” One AD Statistics expanded on the description of the best schools, saying “The local population is now aware and they can challenge teachers and DEO staff on issues they do not understand.”

In contrast, in the worst schools, as more than one official said, PTAs and SMCs exist “only in principle...they do not function” (one AD Statistics). As a Jasikan official described the situation in the

worst schools, “They have PTAs/SMCs but do not turn their discussions into realities.” Another official in Jasikan said that because the PTAs and SMCs are ineffective, teachers break rules freely. In the communities in general, community members “scarcely attend communal labour” and “easily withdraw their children to their farms or go to do fishing.”

## THE DISTRICT GRANT MECHANISM

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### 5.1 Introduction

The QUIPS district grant mechanism is designed to build capacity and provide support to key actors at the district, circuit, community and school levels in Ghana. The programme seeks to assist these groups in learning what it takes to organize, deliver and sustain effective teaching and pupil learning in schools.

The district grant mechanism began in October 2001 with a series of planning workshops for members of the DEO and the DDE to develop work plans for the use of the grant funds.<sup>1</sup> There are plans to spread the district grant mechanism to all 110 districts over time, but at the time of data collection, the new district grant mechanism had been implemented in a limited number of districts. In each participating district, a District Management Implementation Team (DMIT) was formed. The DMIT then planned activities to support primary school improvement using the grants that total about \$10,000, which is dispersed in two parts. In February and March 2002 the first 18 districts received the first tranche of their grants.

Participating districts formulated plans designed to improve the teaching and learning process. The plans require districts to establish a results framework with targets linked to pupil learning and the reduction of pupil dropout. The program seeks to 1) enhance teaching and learning; 2) increase community participation in school affairs; and 3) strengthen district management.

In participating districts, teaching is enhanced through in-service training workshops for teachers with the goal of improving teaching skills and the content of teachers' classes. Other workshops offered involve training in lesson planning, resource management, and the evaluation of pupil performance. Workshops for DEO personnel, including members of the DMIT, stress the importance of management skills and community mobilisation in support of schools.

Before continuing with the discussion, it must be pointed out that among some respondents there was conflation of the first and second phases of QUIPS. The study team made every effort to clarify with respondents that particular questions pertained to the district grant mechanism phase of QUIPS, which involves up to 15 beneficiary schools, rather than to the more intensive first phase of QUIPS,

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<sup>1</sup>Under QUIPS, USAID works mainly through three partners, or collaborating agencies: the Academy for Educational Development (Improving Learning through Partnerships, or ILP); the Education Development Center (Community School Alliance, or CSA), and Catholic Relief Service (CRS).

which covered fewer schools and provided different kinds of assistance.

## **5.2 District response to the invitation to participate**

All three DEOs visited for this study were keen to participate in the district grant mechanism process at least partly because they had a favourable impression of the QUIPS program overall. In fact, many of the comments DEO staff made about QUIPS had to do with the previous years' experience with the programme.

Participation in the district grant mechanism required some reorganization of relationships within the DEO, for a District Management Implementation Team (DMIT) was created to deal with the district grant mechanism. This new team has nine mandated members: the DDE, the four frontline Assistant Directors, the Community Participation Coordinator (CPC), the Girl Child Officer (GCO), the Budget Officer, and a DEPT member.

There is variation in how each DEO has operationalised participation in the district grants mechanism process to date. In Tano, the DEO staff collaborate more closely with one another and with other education stakeholders in the district than is the case in either Yilo Krobo or Jasikan. In Yilo Krobo, for example, both the DCE and a DMIT member were unaware that a district grant mechanism existed. In Jasikan, the District Chief Executive and the DDE are at odds with each other, and the DCE has difficulty getting information about grants and how the funds are used.

## **5.3 District grant mechanism work plans**

USAID recommends broad participation in drawing up the work plan for the district grant, involving staff from the DEO (the DDE, ADs, circuit supervisors, etc.), members of the District Education Planning Team (DEPT), and the District Assembly's District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC). In the three study districts, DEO staff attended the initial workshops designed to build capacity for setting objectives, and—following the work done back at the DEO on the work plan—to review the application and the plan for action.

No one from the District Assembly was involved in the design of the work plan in any of the districts, although at a later stage, two of the DDEs were aware that work was being done under QUIPS. In Tano, the District Management Implementation Team (DMIT) designed the work plan collaboratively. There were, however, complaints from several DEO staff in Yilo Krobo and in Jasikan about the process of finalising the district work plan within the DEO. Several officials said that even though the process was designed to be collaborative, both at the workshops and at the DEO, key DEO staff were effectively excluded from the decision-making process. In Yilo Krobo respondents said that ultimately, one or two DEO staff members designed the work plan. According to one of the district grant mechanism implementing agencies, in the case of Yilo Krobo, two or three DEO staff came to the implementing office to finalise the plan. In Jasikan, one of the ADs asked about the design of the work plan said, "I am not directly involved in this process. While the process should be collective, a few



people are made to do the plan so not much is known to all of us.” While QUIPS fosters a collaborative approach, tensions in two of the three DEOs limited effective participation in the process of designing the work plan and moving ahead with activities.

While the design of the work plan for the use of the first tranche of funds may not have been collaborative in Yilo Krobo, according to the AD Statistics, the introduction of the work plan has affected planning and the release of other funds in the DEO. Prior to the introduction of the district grant mechanism, no work plans were formulated for the district as a whole. Rather, departments prepared their own plans. This situation has changed with the introduction of the district grant mechanism. To access any funds, DEO staff now need to draw up a work plan. In addition, the AD said that with QUIPS assistance, DEO and DMIT staff have learned a great deal about how to prepare realistic work plans.

#### **5.4 The selection of beneficiary schools**

Most DEO officials in the study districts were able to list the 15 schools benefiting from the QUIPS district grant mechanism, although the tendency among some officials was first to list the schools that had benefited under the first phase of QUIPS. According to respondents, there was little argument within the DEO over selection of beneficiary schools. However, it is clear that the decision-making process is not as broad as some officials would like. As one circuit supervisor in Jasikan said: “Circuit supervisors were not involved directly in the grant process. Some of us got to know [about it] only when schools were selected in our circuits to benefit from the programme. Maybe in the future, the USAID must emphasise the involvement of circuit supervisors.”

Among the schools in the district, however, there was tension over which schools were selected for assistance under the district grant mechanism. One respondent in Jasikan suggested that this was a natural reaction, “because not every school was included.” He added, “Some heads were not happy about the selection mechanism. Where disbursement was not transparent, there was some infighting among SMCs and PTAs.” According to a DEO official in another district, “Some heads came to the office to find out why their schools were not chosen.”

#### **5.5 The functioning of the District Management Implementation Team (DMIT)**

As discussed above, the DMIT is a new body—with a prescribed list of members—formed to oversee district grant mechanism activities. By and large, officials in the study districts said that the formation of the DMIT had not raised tensions in the district, and that the DMIT functioned effectively, holding weekly meetings “in a friendly atmosphere after which the entire Directorate is briefed” (an official in Jasikan). According to one AD Supervision, “The DMIT is quite active in the district.”

The exception to this rule was an official in Yilo Krobo who said that the DMIT is ineffective and meets rarely. He was also critical of the composition of the DMIT, saying, “DMIT members should be people who have the qualification[s] to participate and administer the plan.”

## **5.6 Accounting for district grant funds and reporting on results**

After work plans have been approved by USAID and the GES, the district grant funds are released to an account dedicated to the grant. When funds are needed for a project, a memorandum is written up and presented to the District Director of Education (DDE) for approval before authorization is given for the required amount to be withdrawn from the account. As a rule there are two signatories to the account, a member of the DEO and a community representative. According to the respondents, which representatives of each group sign for the funds varies by district.

In Tano, most members of the DEO are aware when a grant disbursement is received. However, this is not the case in the Jasikan and Yilo Krobo districts, where some of the members of the DEO staff do not know when grant funds have been received.

Once an activity has been completed, a report is written to account for the use of the funds. These written reports are vetted and approved by USAID before the next tranche of funds is released.

There is quite a lot of paperwork associated with the district grant mechanism. There are quarterly financial and programme reports that must be completed, along with reports on each district grant activity undertaken (District Grant Form B). Form B requires information on the type of activity conducted; location, duration and time; resource persons involved; participants; budget (estimates and total amount spent); overall assessment of activity; problems encountered in implementing the activity; and a reflection on what was learned during the activity and how it might be improved, and follow-up to the activity. Filling out this form for all district grant mechanism activities requires a significant amount of time from DEO officials. As one AD Finance and Administration said, “The process of accounting for the DGM is too cumbersome.”

## **5.7 Use of the first tranche of district grant funds and plans for the second tranche**

Across the districts, most DEO staff can list some activities funded with the first tranche of the district grant, though few are able to list the main elements of the work plan. Officials from all three districts gave similar answers to questions about how the first tranche of the QUIPS district grant was spent. Activities funded include costs associated with workshops, meetings with the local population in school communities, and the other six activities required as a part of the work plan for use of the district grant mechanism funds, including:

- support to DEO staff in providing school/cluster in-service teacher training
- support to DEO staff in conducting community mobilisation activities
- workshops at the school cluster, circuit, and district levels on teaching of English as a Second Language
- supervisory activities for circuit supervisors and other DEO staff to support QUIPS and non-QUIPS schools

- funding for regional monitoring of grant activities
- support for district-level monitoring and evaluation activities.

In Jasikan, the DCE did not know how the first tranche of funding had been spent. According to the AD Finance and Administration, the first tranche of funds was used for workshops to improve teachers' teaching of English and mathematics, and to train supervisors in record keeping. In Yilo Krobo, the first tranche was spent for teacher training and community mobilisation. In Tano the first tranche funds went to teacher training workshops that were held after hours to avoid interference with regular school activities.

In all three districts, plans were underway for the use of the second tranche of funding. The same impediments to working collaboratively on other activities seem to obtain: In Yilo Krobo, one of the ADs said that while planning was supposed to be done with all of the ADs, this has not happened with plans for the use of the second tranche of funding because of internal squabbles.

## **5.8 Involvement of the local population in district grant activities**

DEO staff have visited selected communities to discuss the importance of education and of community contributions to schooling. One DEO official in Yilo Krobo credited QUIPS with reinvigorating interest in schooling among the local population, teachers, and pupils. Her impression was that following the community sensitisation workshops, community members who previously had showed little interest have started visiting schools to see how teachers and pupils are performing. In some communities where involvement in schooling had been minimal, with the encouragement of QUIPS, PTAs have been formed and people have begun to work together on school projects. During the study team's visit to one school in Yilo Krobo, unpaid community members were constructing a building at the school. At some schools, QUIPS activities are credited with strengthening enrolment and with encouraging parents to visit schools more often.

While many respondents mentioned an increased interest in schooling among community members in the beneficiary communities, several complained generally of apathy among parents who do not send their children to school or keep them out of school on occasion. For instance, a member of the DEPT in Yilo Krobo was critical of illiterate parents removing their children from school on market days because they do not understand "what education is about." Presumably, this kind of critique is not part of the community sensitisation programme under QUIPS, since parents likely respond better to invitations to participate than to criticism of their decisions about how their children spend their time.

## **5.9 Impressions of the effects of the district grant mechanism**

### **Overall assessment**

The vast majority of DEO officials and other respondents praised the district grant mechanism for its effects on community participation in schooling and for the improvement of teaching and learning

activities. As the AD Finance and Administration in Yilo Krobo described the process, “School communities have been awakened to responsibilities toward their children and the schools...[such as] provision of basic school needs.” In the same district, the AD HRMD listed four changes under the district grant mechanism: “i)The idea of schools being for government has been removed to a large extent. ii) The community now control the activities of their own pupils...supervise their homework, provide school bags, and even some accommodation for teachers at low cost. iii) It has put the DEO staff on their toes through visits to the schools. iv) Made the Planning, Statistics, Research Records, and Monitoring and Evaluation unit at the DEO to work harder than usual.”

The AD for Human Resources Management and Development in Tano said that the training that teachers had received thus far under the district grant mechanism has brought them up to date with changes in teaching methodologies. The PTA chairman at a school in Yilo Krobo echoed this assessment, saying that since QUIPS started providing assistance to the school, the teachers’ performance has improved, as shown by teachers giving more assignments to pupils and pupils’ improved performance on examinations.

### **Broadening the effort to all schools in the district**

In the study districts, there was a strong desire to expand the QUIPS district grant mechanism to additional schools and communities in the district. In Yilo Krobo, The DDE said that because the community sensitisation efforts under the district grant mechanism had been so successful, the DEO was trying to work with non-beneficiary communities to make them realise that they own the schools and that they should be more involved in their children’s schooling. One official in Tano said that the training some teachers had received had opened up a wide gap between them and other non-beneficiary teachers in the district, who hoped to benefit from the same training soon.

Implicitly, then, there is a critique that the district grant mechanism does not serve all schools in the district at the same time. In addition, at this point in time, the improved management and support services at the DEO are not seen to trickle down to schools that are not yet explicitly included in the training activities. In a related comment, the DDE in Tano praised the district grant mechanism, saying that her only wish was that the funds might be increased since the first disbursement of 28 million cedis allowed the district to undertake important activities, but left others unfunded.

### **Suggestions for modifications in the district grant mechanism process**

While DEO officials were supportive of the QUIPS district grant mechanism, many said that between various activities and programs, including QUIPS, they had attended a number of workshops in the last year. Several officials said that while they valued the workshops, there were so many of them that it was difficult to find time to implement anything learned in the workshops. The AD Finance and Administration in one district said that at one point in time, the DEO was overburdened by QUIPS activities supported by both ILP and CSA.

The AD HRMD in Yilo Krobo was very well informed about QUIPS and the functioning of the district grant mechanism, and praised its effects. However, he also discussed the fact that because of high head teacher turnover, much of the training under QUIPS and other interventions was lost to particular schools, and recommended training for new staff. At one of the district grant beneficiary schools in Yilo Krobo, the head teacher lamented that 3 of the 6 teachers at the school who had been trained under the district grant mechanism had already been transferred to other schools. Clearly, if one of the goals of the district grant funding is to build a solid team at the school, having teachers transferred out of the schools is problematic.

As suggested earlier, the paperwork associated with the district grant mechanism is substantial and cumbersome. Streamlining the process would allow for critical information to be collected, while not overburdening DEO officials. One option might be to use forms to collect basic information about activities, while further information could be collected by implementing partners during visits to the DEO. Stories about successes and challenges, for instance, might best be collected through face-to-face discussions with DEO staff. At the same time, the suggestion of one AD Finance and Administration should be kept in mind. The official said, “The donors should manage and get to the ground to ensure that activities are really performed as stated,” suggesting that in spite of the work plan and the stringent reporting requirements, activities reported on may not always have been undertaken as described in reports.



## CONCLUSIONS

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### 6.1 Effects of decentralisation

The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) have been working toward the complete implementation of decentralisation for some years. The GES has instituted a system for determining whether districts are prepared to fulfil their responsibilities under decentralisation. The study team's contacts with three districts suggest that many districts lack the skills, expertise, and the infrastructure necessary to fulfil those responsibilities in a satisfactory manner.

One critical problem with the decentralisation effort is the lack of clarity in terms of responsibility and authority. With a District Education Office theoretically responsible to both higher levels of the GES and to the District Assembly, myriad difficulties arise. As delineated in this report, the government's approach to teacher discipline issues is unworkable. The GES Code of Professional Conduct aims to specify what constitutes misconduct, the penalties associated with misconduct, and the lines of authority for disciplining teachers. However, the description of penalties is convoluted, there are no clear guidelines on procedures, and there is ambiguity as to responsibility for enforcing the code of discipline. The Code situates responsibility both within the GES and within the District Assembly District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC), and stipulates an unworkable working relationship between the authorities. The end result is that all too often, disciplinary matters—which are by nature difficult to deal with—are likely not to be addressed by the system.

Another problem under decentralisation is the delay in the annual transfer of basic education funds to the DEO. According to a senior GES official, the bulk of the government funding for the 2001-2002 school year was not received by schools until after the end of that school year. Under these circumstances, school districts face enormous pressure to find alternative sources of funding or to teach without resources. The delay in disbursement of funds further aggravates other problems that stem from a shortage of resources.

The GES is fully committed to a policy of decentralisation of responsibility and resource allocation. It will take time to solve the problems of fund dispersal to districts. In the meantime, the GES and selected education leaders could consider what the delay of funds and other problems imply for the functioning of the DEO and take measures to relieve some of the effects of having such limited resources during a school year.

## 6.2 The district grant mechanism

As part of the new phase of QUIPS, the district grant mechanism has not been in operation long enough to comment on its possible effects on improving teaching and learning in schools. However, the comments of DEO officials and community leaders point to a number of issues for consideration:

- The DEOs welcome the district grant mechanism because they expect it will improve schooling in their district.
- Teachers and pupils have benefited from the teacher training workshops.
- Paperwork related to the district grant mechanism is considerable and burdensome to DEO officials, while perhaps not producing the desired results (in terms of providing a complete picture of district grant mechanism activities).
- The emphasis on management training and accountability will provide a solid basis for improving DEO operations if the programme can be expanded to many schools over a period of several years.
- Given the shortage of resources at the district level, DEO officials find the district grant sum useful but small in relation to the needs for training and for community mobilisation in the districts.

## 6.3 Recommendations

There are myriad difficulties in trying to implement education decentralisation in Ghana. The recommendations below focus on smaller-scale activities to facilitate the functioning of DEOs and of the implementation of the QUIPS district grant mechanism.

- *Actively encourage collaboration between the DMIT and the DEO, and between the DEO and the District Assembly.* Given the dangers of fragmentation in a decentralised education system, with responsibilities spread over multiple government agencies, great effort is needed to implement activities. The DMIT is a new body designed to implement the district grant mechanism, but there is also potential for the DMIT to contribute more broadly to bridging the gaps between various groups.
- *Focus on rationalising government policy on key issues, such as the Code of Professional Conduct and lines of authority for teacher discipline.* Given the critical importance of discipline among teachers and GES staff, it is vital for the rules and regulations, penalties and procedures, and lines of authority to be absolutely clear. When this is the case, oversight of the system will be possible and the process will be more transparent to all involved.
- *Design a comprehensive plan for staff training in the DEO.* Several respondents said that they were too busy attending various workshops to implement any of the lessons or skills learned, and



other respondents complained that some of their colleagues were too busy with workshops to carry out their duties. With a plan for which staff members will receive what kind of training under various GES, QUIPS, and other initiatives, time for making use of what is learned could be scheduled.

- *Expand the scope and duration of the district grant mechanism.* USAID could capitalize the current experience with the district grant mechanism and the good relationships with many school districts by dramatically expanding its assistance programme in size and in duration. In its current form, the district grant mechanism is able to reach only a small percentage of the schools and communities in the selected districts. Capacity-building in the DEO is a long-term effort that the district grant mechanism could contribute to significantly.

**Yilo Krobo district**

District Chief Executive, Chairman of the DEOC  
District Director for Education  
Assistant Director of Finance and Administration  
Assistant Director of Statistics  
Assistant Director of Human Resources, Management and Development  
Assistant Director Supervision  
Girl Child Officer  
Circuit Supervisor  
Head Teacher (2)  
Budget Officer  
PTA Chairman (2)  
SMC member (2)  
DEPT member (2)  
DMIT member  
Traditional Council member  
DEOC member

**Tano district**

District Chief Executive  
District Director for Education  
Assistant Director of Finance and Administration  
Assistant Director of Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation  
Assistant Director Supervision  
Circuit Supervisors (3)  
Head Teachers (3)  
PTA Chairman  
DEPT member  
DEOC member  
Traditional Council member  
Deputy Chief Accountant

**Jasikan district**

District Chief Executive  
DEOC member  
District Director for Education

Assistant Director of Finance and Administration  
Assistant Director of Statistics and Planning  
Assistant Director Supervision

Girl Child Officer  
Circuit Supervisor  
Chairman of Circuit Supervisors  
Head Teachers (3)  
Budget Officer  
PTA Chairman (2)  
DEPT member  
DMIT member  
SMC member (2)  
Senior Accountant